

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Exploring Phonological Amplification Through the Hearit System

Despite emphasis on formal testing, reading delays occur. Reading comprehension assessments show that the major weakness for the elementary school is students' inability to read for meaning and to make inferences (Micek, 2000). A gap exists between the ability to decode words and the ability to give adequate meaning to the words being read. This gap sets the problem that prevents reading success today. No Child Left Behind (2002) tells us that all students must learn to read on grade level and must read with proficiency. The American Federation of Teachers stated that research now shows that a child who does not learn the reading basics early is unlikely to learn them at all (Moats, 1999). New scientific research has found new ways to save young minds by helping them to become proficient readers (Bruer, 1999). A probable cause for the problem is absence of individualization of reading instruction to provide a variety of reading strategies that are designed specifically for each student. After a reading problem is identified, the method of instruction must change to emphasize the learning style strength of the child. Teachers must attempt to improve reading by constructing new goals and instructional approaches (Santa, 1997). The skill of reading is extremely complex. It involves several different processors in the brain. It is a combination of several physical and mental skills (Micek, 2000). Nunley, 2002, states the one major problem is that teachers use a traditional approach based on lecture and verbal discussion to teach. She found that only 20% of the students are auditory learners. Therefore, methods must be used that help enhance auditory reception.

Hearit is introducing tools that are user friendly and can be adapted to any classroom environment. The goal is to use the auditory enhancement technology to improve reading comprehension and standardized test performance. Auditory feedback reinforces the meaning of what the student has just read. With a Hearit amplification system, the student can read the test aloud for sustained attention and content mastery. Application can be individual or in a group. It is an opportunity for more internal

monologue, which is difficult for some students to produce. Therefore, external sounds seep in to what the student is hearing himself read and the student loses auditory attention.

Lindamood (1997) stresses the importance of emphasizing sensory cognitive factors in order to improve reading. The Hearit system meets this need because of the feedback allowed for the learner when surrounding sounds and distractions are removed.

Lindamood-Bell (2002) goes on to say that phonological awareness is vital in being able to distinguish word sounds and differences. Awareness of the constituent sounds of the words is enhanced by using the Hearit system. The feedback for the learner is instant. Only the natural voice of the teacher or student is heard and excitement develops as the student can hold onto what he recently heard. The equipment can be used with an individual, in a small group, or with an entire classroom. Frustration will decrease and motivation will rise. The tools are very portable so the student can learn to use them independently. The result can be astounding.

Hearing the teacher explain what is to be read or what the information was about is an example of auditory perception. This is an input process which helps get information into the brain from the ears. Peripheral noises tend to protrude and interrupt what the student hears. It appears as if the student is not paying attention. Therefore, focus on the words being read does not occur. Hearit puts an end to this problem and allows the student to put meaning to what was heard. Therefore, comprehension increases and formal test scores rise.